



June 2015

If the case fits



I'm pleased to report that Council officers are making good progress on the business case for the possible extension of the trams in Edinburgh, which already shows the clear economic benefit it could have on the city.

In the tram's first year of operation we have seen passenger numbers surpass their target, demonstrating a growing demand for public transport in Edinburgh and making the case for extending the tram to benefit people elsewhere in the city.

That said, it is essential that we learn from past experience, and we won't be making any snap decisions about the future of the project. That's why we've appointed a third party to verify the figures and are carrying out a market consultation to gauge the interest of contractors who may potentially bid to work on the project.

I look forward to receiving the updated business case in the autumn, which will put forward thoroughly researched and independently scrutinised options for an extension.

Positive destinations

Great news: figures published by the Scottish Government this week show that more Edinburgh school leavers than ever are moving into work, education, or training.

Since launching the [Edinburgh Guarantee](#) scheme four years ago, our *positive destination* figure has risen to 93.1%, an increase of 10%. The Capital is now the best performing city in Scotland and is 12th out of all local authority areas, which puts us well above the national average. Hear more about the figures, and the people behind them, in this [short video](#).

We must acknowledge, of course, that there is still a lot of work to be done to drive this figure even higher through targeted support for areas of the city with deprivation and high unemployment.

A leaner, more agile Council

We must change the way we work to meet the needs of Edinburgh's growing population and address the significant financial challenges we face. To this end, councillors have been asked to consider proposals that will transform our services and help us to make essential savings of at least £107m over the next five years.

This includes streamlining the council structure to become more efficient and deliver more services locally to those people who need them the most. It will also involve a more joined up approach to how we work with partners like Police Scotland and NHS Lothian.

Of course, changes on this scale can be unsettling for staff and we are looking at what support we can give, including the development of a new Career Transition Service. We will also continue to engage with both staff and trade unions as the proposals develop.

City Region Deal

I've periodically mentioned progress towards an [Edinburgh City Region Deal](#), and I'm pleased to report this month that we have now had constructive, initial engagement with both the Scottish Government and UK Governments.

The next stage towards delivery has been commissioned, and our development partners are now in place. Further, a recent University of Edinburgh event also saw significant interest in our recent progress from [ResPublica](#) who have extensive experience in assisting the development of City Deals across the UK.

These are all early positive signs, with a lot of work still in front of us, but all six local authorities involved are continuing to focus hard on the aim-at-hand: delivering a Deal that will help ensure continued economic growth and a reduction in inequality across the whole South East Scotland Region.

Trusted traders

A new online directory, [Trusted Traders Edinburgh](#), launched this week to help residents choose contractors with confidence.

After being carefully checked out by our Trading Standards team, contractors are accepted as members and their details added to the website. Around 40 traders and businesses have already signed up, creating a new 'go to list' for people looking for services such as home repairs. Customers can use the directory to find local contractors' details with the reassurance that they are reliable and have been fully vetted.

Edinburgh's scheme was created after a public consultation found that many home owners are hesitant about organising shared repairs in common areas as they don't know how to find a trustworthy trader.

Compact volunteer framework

The Lord Provost has just hosted the City's Annual Volunteering Awards ceremony, recognising the contribution of over 100 outstanding volunteers, including his Inspiring Volunteer of the Year 2015, Malik Masood, who has campaigned over many years for older and ethnic minority people. Very well deserved.

You may not be aware that Edinburgh is home to 2,630 charitable organizations, which make an annual economic contribution of £2.7bn, employ 15,000 people and are supported by over a third of residents who regularly volunteer.

I am delighted, therefore, to report that the Compact Partnership, currently in its tenth year of operation, has recently agreed [an ambitious new Strategic Framework](#) that will continue to guide public and voluntary sector relations over the next five to 10 years.

Culture vultures

As ever in Edinburgh, residents won't be short of doorstep discoveries this summer. From the biggest ever Fringe programme to a whole host of events and activities at the Council's museums and galleries, there's something to suit all budgets.

At the Museum of Edinburgh, two brand new [interactive exhibits](#) have opened. Free-to-enter, they bring the stories behind some of the city's treasured artefacts to life including items belonging to Edinburgh-born WW1 British Commander Earl Haig, who created The Royal British Legion.

Meanwhile, at the City Art Centre, visitors can find sensational Scottish art spanning 350 years and more than 150 paintings, sketches and pieces of sculpture. A visit to [Scottish Art: People, Places, Ideas](#) is free.

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